

LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for processing sheet material, ~~in particular bank note processing machine such as bank notes~~, comprising

- a transport path (1) for the sheet material (100),
- a checking device (SP 4) for checking the sheet material (100) with at least two components (4,5; 4,15) lying opposite each other along the transport path (1),
- a conveyor belt located in transport direction before the checking device ~~a conveyor belt (2) and transport devices~~ opposite thereto ~~transport devices (3) for holding and guiding arranged to hold and guide~~ the sheet material, wherein the conveyor belt (2) with the help of at least one deflection roller (6; 16) is led away from the transport path (1) before the checking device, so that a ~~the~~ sheet material in the sensing region of the checking device is without a guidance by conveyor belt, and
- clamping rings (10), which are disposed coaxial to the at least one deflection roller (6; 16) disposed in transport direction before the checking device and project over the conveyor belt (2),

wherein the transport devices (3) lying opposite the conveyor belt (2) co-operate with the clamping rings (10), in order to grasp sheet material (100) guided in the transport path (1) and to guide it through between the two components (4,5; 4,15) of the checking device, and (SP 4), ~~characterized in that~~ by the co-operation of the transport devices (3) with the clamping rings (10) the sheet material is led through between the two components of the checking device in plane alignment and ~~that~~ for supporting this process a guide plate (8) is provided, which combs with the clamping rings (10).

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the conveyor belt extends (2) ~~is led~~ around the checking device via (SP 4) ~~with the help of the~~ at least one deflection roller (6; 16).

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3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~or 2,~~
~~characterized in that~~ the clamping rings (10) at least along their outside
circumference comprise ~~consist of~~ elastic material.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein
~~characterized in that~~ the circumference path of the clamping rings (10) slightly
overlaps with a circumference path of the transport devices (3) co-operating with
them.

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~any~~
~~of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that~~ the clamping rings (10) and the at least one
deflection roller (6; 16) are disposed on a common shaft (14).

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~any~~
~~of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that~~ the transport devices (3) are actively driven
and the clamping rings (10) independently of the at least one deflection roller (6; 16)
passively rotate along with the transport rollers (3).

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~any~~
~~of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that~~ the clamping rings (10) are rigidly connected to
each other.

8. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~any~~
~~of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that~~ the guide plate (8) extends opposite one of the
two components (4) of the checking device (~~SP~~ 4) along the transport path (1) and
defines a guiding channel (11) for the sheet material to be checked, the narrowest
point of which lies in transport direction behind the clamping rings (10).

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein
~~characterized in that~~ the guiding channel (11) continuously widens in transport
direction behind the narrowest point.

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10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein any
~~of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that~~ the transport devices (3) lying opposite the
conveyor belt (2) are transport rollers in transport direction spaced apart from each
other.

11. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein any
~~of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that~~ the transport devices (3) lying opposite the
conveyor belt (2) also comprise a conveyor belt, which is led away from the transport
path (1) before the checking device via (SP 4) ~~with the help of at least one~~ deflection
roller.